DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 671 EA 028 133

AUTHOR Peel, Henry A.; Wallace, Corinna
TITLE Improving Leadership Preparation Programs through a School, University, and Professional Organization Partnership.
PUB DATE Aug 96
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (Corpus Christi, TX, August 6-10, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; *College School Cooperation; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Internship Programs; *Leadership Training; Management Development; Mentors; Partnerships in Education; *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

Beginning educational administrators often find that they are unprepared to deal with the realities of school administration. This paper describes how the Halifax County, North Carolina, school system worked with a national organization and an area university to develop a plan to improve its administrator-preparation program. In 1992 the school system created a partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals and East Carolina University called the Potential Administrator's Development Program (PADP). During the first year of the program, participants attended monthly seminars on topics relevant to administrators and were paired with mentors. During the second year, participants who had completed most of the requirements for licensure were given the opportunity to complete a 6-week internship. A survey of 10 participants in the PADP elicited 9 responses. Seven of the nine respondents held administrative positions. Most agreed that the program had provided them with valuable experience that would enhance their careers. They reported that activities that simulated actual administrative tests were valuable in linking theory and practice. They suggested that the program provide more information on school financial management, legal issues regarding student rights, personnel issues, management of auxiliary school functions, and state reporting forms. Overall, respondents rated the PADP as excellent and reported that it had eased their transition into administration. (Contains 10 references.) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 402 671

EA

Improving Leadership Preparation Programs Through a School, University, and Professional Organization Partnership

Henry A. Peel, Associate Dean
School of Education
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC 27858

Corinna Wallace, Graduate Student
School of Education
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC 27858

A paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration in Corpus Christi, Texas on August 8, 1996

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. Peel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

EA 028 133

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Improving Leadership Preparation Programs Through a School, University, and Professional Organization Partnership

Margaret Jones moved her diploma slightly to the right; that's it, perfect!! Here she was in her first day as a principal in her own school. She had been an outstanding student and was on the cutting edge of all of the latest theories of how to properly lead a school. As she straightened the stacks of reports on her desk one more time, the phone rang. "Ms. Jones" shrieked the secretary, "Mr. Arnold is on the line and he is pretty upset that Lee is in Ms. Apple's class. Oh, and by the way, the Central Office just called and they need your RF-30 form by 5:00 today."

"What's an RF...?" Click.

Knock. Knock. "Hi, Ms. Jones, congratulations on getting the principal's position. I'm Mary Thomas the first grade teacher. Listen, I've got great news too. My husband and I just found out that our adoption has gone through after eight years, so I won't be back in the fall. I wanted to make sure you had plenty of time to fill my position, since school starts in two weeks. Well, I better get going. I think the transportation director is waiting to see you; something about doubling up bus routes."

"Wow, where has the morning gone?" thought Margaret, "Why, it's already 8:30?! I don't remember a theory about how to deal with irate parents and I know they never told us about the RF-30 form in class. Why is the transportation director coming to see me? I thought bus scheduling was his job? I have missions to write, goals to set, and instructional plans to develop."

Much too often, new principals face just the kind of beginning described by Margaret Jones, the fictitious principal in this scenario. They find themselves armed with the theory and overwhelmed with the reality.

Often educational administrators are ill-equipped to deal with the real tasks of running a school when they first enter the administrative arena. Universities have traditionally focused on introducing potential administrators to the latest trends and theories in educational leadership, but provide few practical skills for transferring that knowledge to the real world. To better prepare future administrators, universities and schools are working together to develop programs that more appropriately address the tasks encountered in the local principal's office. Research indicates that the most effective programs use practical teaching methods such as role-playing, simulation activities, internships, and mentoring to encourage students to transfer their theoretical knowledge to the practice of educational leadership (Cordeiro, Boutilier, Panicek, & Salamone-Consoli, 1993; Playko, 1992; Allen & Stacy, 1991; Stewart, 1991; Oldaker, 1995; Heller, 1989). This paper describes how one school system worked with a national organization and an area university to develop a plan to better prepare their own administrators. Using an internship based model, the program developers sought to provide practical applications to support theories being taught in the classroom. The initial evaluation performed at the end of the two year program yielded promising results. Two years have passed since the end of the program during which time several participants have moved into administrative roles. This paper reports results of a survey sent to participants. The survey questions participants' feelings about the program and how it impacted their careers.

What We Know

Theory-to-Practice

Programs with high success rates rely heavily on practical classroom activities. Role playing scenarios, reflection groups, and inservice training are activities that encourage students to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-life situations in a non-threatening environment (Cordeiro et al., 1993; Playko, 1992; Allen & Stacy, 1991; Stewart, 1991; Oldaker, 1995; Heller, 1989). These activities allow students to react to typical administrative tasks under the watchful and evaluative eyes of their classmates and professors. Reflection groups, in particular, build camaraderie among class members and help develop cohesiveness within the group.

Mentoring

Not only do future administrators need experience on-the-job, they also need someone to serve as a guide through the process -- a guide who is interested in the future administrator's progress and wants him/her to succeed. A model for offering guidance is the practice of assigning mentors (Cordeiro et al., 1993; Playko, 1992; Allen & Stacy, 1991; Stewart, 1991; Oldaker, 1995; Heller, 1989). By training professionals to act as mentors to potential administrators, programs provide students with an experienced resource person who offers feedback and guidance in the field (Peca, 1994; Playko, 1992; Allen & Stacy, 1989; Stewart, 1991; Oldaker, 1995; Hill, 1994). Together, mentor and intern develop a field experience that follows program guidelines and addresses the specific needs of the intern (Peca, 1994; Playko, 1992; Allen & Stacy, 1989; Stewart, 1991; Oldaker, 1995; Hill, 1994).

Internships

In recent years, the call has gone out for universities to produce educational leaders who are better equipped for the administrative role. Research suggests that the most successful educational leadership preparation programs are those that integrate theory and practice to provide students with a more realistic perception of the field (Peca, 1994; Cordeiro, Boutilier, Panicek, & Salamone-Consoli, 1993; Heller, 1989; Stewart, 1991). In order for this type of training to occur, universities and public schools must work together to coordinate university classes with practical field experience (Peel & Walker, 1993; Peca, 1994; Cordeiro et al., 1993; Playko, 1992; Oldaker, 1995; Heller, 1989; Harris, 1994). While universities are responsible for providing quality classroom experiences, schools are equally responsible for providing quality internships that are reflective of the day-to-day tasks of an administrator (Richards & Fox, 1990).

Establishing a Cohort

Helping participants move from an individual mindset to one of a cohort, helps to establish excellence within the program. Allowing public school officials to nominate candidates from among their most qualified educators establishes a core group of excellent individuals (Cordeiro, et al., 1993; Playko, 1992; Allen & Stacy, 1989; Stewart, 1991; Hill, 1994). Cohorts emphasize the shared experiences among participants and reduce the anxiety that many feel while stuck between the administrative and teaching roles. By fostering a close-knit cohort, programs demonstrate the importance of team work and collaboration and provide a network of peers (H.C. Hudgins, personal communication, May 3, 1996).

Background

Like many rural school systems, Halifax County, located in Northeastern North Carolina, had trouble attracting and retaining high quality administrators. Young administrators viewed the system as a stepping stone, providing experience they needed to move on to bigger and better systems. Being a revolving door system left many schools without solid leadership and wreaked havoc on morale. If administrators were not committed to the schools, teachers and students were not likely to be either. In searching for a solution to the problem, central office personnel examined how they could recruit administrators who were committed to the schools and children of their county. Additionally, since Halifax County's demographics include 49 % African-Americans, 3% Native Americans, 2% other minorities, and 46% white, the system wanted to recruit and hire a significant number of minority administrators.

Together with the National Association of Secondary School Principals and East Carolina University, a plan was developed to tap into the resources available within the school system. By selecting the most promising teachers from among their own ranks, the system could invest in excellent educators who had demonstrated a commitment to remaining in and serving Halifax County Schools. NASSP's involvement was solicited because of their demonstrated commitment and interest in administrator development programs.

The University's involvement in the program was twofold. First, acting as the liaison for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, it provided participants with the opportunity to obtain a license to be an administrator in the state of North Carolina. Secondly, the University was interested in improving its own internship

program within the Department of Educational Leadership and saw this program as an opportunity to experiment with more innovative methods of training future administrators.

The culmination of the plan resulted in the Halifax County Potential Administrator's Development Program (PADP). In 1992, ten minority educators were selected as the first cohort. During the first year of the program, participants attended monthly seminars on topics relevant to administrators. The concluding event of the year was the NASSP's Springfield Development Program. Using simulation activities, participants were introduced to "real-life" scenarios often encountered by administrators. Another feature of the program was the pairing of each participant with both a mentor and university supervisor who offered guidance throughout the program.

The focus of the second year was an internship. Participants who had completed most of the requirements for licensure were given the opportunity to complete a six week internship. The first four weeks were spent in a school at the grade level of the intern's choice with the last two weeks being split between schools of different grade levels. Under the guidance of their mentors, interns received on-the-job experience in the day to day activities of an administrator.

At the completion of the program, participants were surveyed regarding their perceptions of the program. By the end of the program, five of the participants had obtained principal licenses and several more were completing programs at East Carolina University. During the final evaluation of the program, most participants agreed that the program had provided them with valuable experience that would enhance their careers.

Findings

Questionnaires were mailed to all ten participants of the PADP. Of those ten, nine responded for a 90% response rate. Currently, five of the participants hold either principal or assistant principal positions, one serves as instructional specialist, one as a department chair, and two remain in teaching. Responses indicated that in addition to the five principals who had obtained licenses, two more members of the cohort were actively pursuing it and two respondents indicated no further interest in pursuing licenses. Reasons given for no longer seeking licensure were personal reasons related to age and years until retirement.

Theory-to-Practice

When participants were asked what they felt was the most beneficial part of the program, all but one answer included references to activities that simulated actual administrative tasks; role-playing and an in-box activity received lots of praise. Other activities that focused on practical experience, such as the internship and mentor/mentee relationship, were also common answers.

All respondents were taking graduate classes during their participation in PADP, although one person was a non-degree student. Participants noted a strong correlation between their classes and the activities of the PADP and felt that this reinforcement was very beneficial. In class, students were taught the theories behind educational administration. During the development program activities, they saw how theories were applied. Instructors attempted to draw parallels between classroom discussions and simulation and role playing activities of the PADP.

Mentoring

Each person who responded had been paired with a mentor at the end of their first year in the program. Most found the mentoring experience to be very helpful. Being situated in a small community, many people had a previous relationship with their mentors and maintained these casual relationships when the program ended. The most common response was that this person was available when they needed assistance. However, the three participants who reported a strong, on-going, professional relationship with their mentors after the program ended all had obtained principalships or assistant principalships.

Internship

Three respondents did not participate in the internship, but those who did felt the experience gained in the internship was instrumental in their success as an administrator. Several participants who had not moved into principalships felt the internship better prepared them for their current positions, making them better leaders and providing insight into the administrative role. The internship provided the opportunity to experience a variety of administrative tasks in a safe environment. Receiving feedback from their mentors and cohort, left participants feeling more confident of their ability. By observing another person's administrative style, interns were able to get an idea of the most effective administrative tactics and incorporate those ideas into their own arsenal.

Participant Recommendations

When asked what areas were not adequately covered in the PADP, most responses revolved around basic issues that face any new manager. Practical information on managing school finances was noted. Many administrators felt they needed more

experience dealing with the legal issues surrounding student behavior and the rights of students. Administrators also felt they needed a better understanding of how to deal with personnel issues. Questions also arose about resolving discipline issues and managing the auxiliary functions of the school such as food service and transportation. Participants were also overwhelmed by the paperwork. One respondent indicated that while she could prepare the required reports, she spent days reading instructions. Familiarizing students with some of the standard state forms would decrease anxiety and reduce time away from the more important aspects of the job.

When asked what recommendations they would make for the program, many responses focused on the legal issues and politics associated with managing a school. Several felt the program would be more complete if it focused more on helping participants understand the current legal trends in education and how to maneuver through the ranks of school boards, the central office, and state agencies.

Overall, participants considered the PADP excellent. Participants who were already in administrative positions felt the PADP had eased their transition into administration. One person remarked how important it was for participants to be able to work with the university in their own community. Even those who had not finished licensure, felt they were better leaders as a result of completing the program and had a better understanding of the administration. Finally, one participant who had just been hired as a principal exclaimed, "Excellent!! I reached my career goal in half the anticipated time. Thanks a million!!"

Implications

Theory-to-Practice

Clearly, participants of the PADP believed in the program and attributed much of their success to their involvement. Repeatedly, the activities rated most valuable provided students with real-life implications for their theoretical knowledge. Much like the research predicted, participants valued role-playing and simulation activities that forced them to think like an administrator while under the watchful eye of colleagues and professors. By coordinating course work with practical exercises, organizers of the PADP provided students with a strong theoretical base and personified it by having students practice transferring theory into real-life.

Internship

The internship seems to be the strongest link between theory and real-life experience. During internships, participants saw firsthand how a principal's office functions on a daily basis. The experience received during the internship is unique in that the intern has an experienced administrator available for feedback. During this time, there is more freedom to try new, more innovative ideas and to reflect on those that are less successful.

When the internship is paired with a reflection group, interns are able to closely examine their experience in comparison to that of their cohort. Reflection groups allow students to consider various administrative techniques and weigh the advantages of each. Such discussion stimulates interns to examine the reasons and provide justification for decisions they make. By integrating classroom discussions into the reflection groups, students are encouraged to examine their techniques and those of their mentors in light of

currently accepted theory. Comparing theory to practice initiates discussion of the applicability of theoretical ideas and challenges current practice.

Practical, action oriented activities appear to be the bridge that unites administrative theory with professional educational leadership. New administrators armed only with theories lack key experiential skills that might ease their transition into professional positions. Requiring student internships that introduce them to the educational leadership arena help them to establish a network of peers and experienced professionals who can provide support and feedback throughout the learning process. Internships allow students to find their professional niche in an environment that still nurtures and supports them. They also create a bridge for students into the role of professional administrator. Interns enter the work force a step ahead of their colleagues by having at least a limited amount of experience.

Mentoring

Another important feature of a successful administrative development program appears to be providing well-trained and knowledgeable mentors. By working closely with an experienced professional, interns gain valuable time-tested ideas about what it takes to be an effective administrator. The most effective mentors enable novice administrators to critically examine current educational leadership practices. Programs that have experienced the most success with mentor/mentee relationships teach their mentors how to be effective.

By teaching experienced administrators how to be effective mentors, programs establish the mentor as a guide and advisor of less experienced administrators and not out to clone him or herself. Training programs for mentors help experienced professionals

develop an accurate picture of the role of the mentor. Effective mentors challenge their mentees, and allow them the freedom to assume responsibility for certain duties. The mentoring relationship also stimulates critical thinking, forcing both the experienced and inexperienced administrator to provide justification for the choices he/she makes. Mentees often rejuvenate the administrative environment by reinstating a theoretical approach to the decisions that are made.

Conclusion

What this process showed was that a partnership to improve administrative training is a viable option. Additionally, new administrators were better prepared by participating in the Potential Administrator's Development Program. The practical, "hands-on" experience served to augment the traditional, higher education, theory based programs. While further study is desirable, this process seemed to provide the Ms. Jones's with a better sense of what will be and equips them to deal with the day-to-day while allowing time for important leadership facts necessary to improve schools.

References

Allen, B. & Stacy, M. H. (1989). Grow your own: Developing instructional leaders for the future. *Clearinghouse, 62*, 360-361.

Cordeiro, P., Boutilier, L., Panicek, J., & Salamone-Consoli, A. (1993, February). *The training of school administrators: The roles of practitioners, students and profesors.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators, Orlando, FL.

Heller, M. (1989). The best game in town. *Momentum, 20*, 28-31.

Hill, M.S. (1994). Transitional supports for the internship. *Design for Leadership: The Bulletin of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 4*, 1-6.

Oldaker, L.L. (1995, February). *The University of Alaska learning cooperative: An innvoative statewide program in educaitonal leadership.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Associate of School Administrators, New Orleans, LA.

Peca, K. (1994, February). *A collaborative model of administrative internship: Meeting the needs of the university and local districts.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators, San Francisco, CA.

Peel, H.A. & Walker, B.L. (1993). Collaboration: Getting all hands on deck facilitates school change. *Journal of School Leadership, 3*, 30-39.

Playko, M.A. (1992). Educational leadership outside the school administrator's door. *Teaching Education, 5*, 81-90.

Richards, J.J. & Fox, A. (1990). The internship--A meaningful experience for new administrators. *NASSP Bulletin, 74*, 26-32.

Stewart, J.A. (1991). Priming the principal pump: Interns in Polk County. *Updating School Board Policies, 22(3)*, 1-3.